



Assemblymember Tasha Boerner, 77th District
AB 1992 BLUE CARBON PROJECTS IN COASTAL DEVELOPMENTS
(AS INTRODUCED JANUARY 30, 2024)

SUMMARY

AB 1992 would authorize the California Coastal Commission (Commission) to add blue carbon demonstration projects to the suite of factors it considers for potential mitigation when approving coastal development permits, where feasible.

BACKGROUND

A blue carbon project is defined as the creation or restoration of coastal wetland, intertidal, or marine habitats or ecosystems, including, but not limited to, kelp forests, seagrasses, and wetlands, that capture carbon.

Blue carbon habitats can sequester more carbon per acre than many types of terrestrial habitats. When these ecosystems are degraded or damaged directly or indirectly by human activities, their ability to sequester carbon is adversely affected or lost completely.

Blue carbon ecosystems [have lost](#) an estimated 35 percent of their global cover since 1970. Current estimates suggest the loss of these important marine ecosystems is occurring at a rate of 2-7 percent per year—a higher rate than other ecosystems, even rainforests. Research indicates that if blue carbon ecosystems continue to decline at the current rate, 30 to 40 percent of tidal marshes and seagrasses and approximately 100 percent of mangroves could be gone in the next century.

According to [WILD COAST](#), the sponsor of the bill, research shows that blue carbon ecosystems, such as sea grasses and salt marshes are more efficient at capturing and storing atmospheric carbon than most terrestrial forests. In fact, some blue carbon ecosystems can sequester five times more carbon than tropical rainforests and store 50 times more in their surrounding soil. Sadly, California has lost over 90 percent of its

historical wetlands and the associated benefits they provide.

AB 1992 would authorize the Commission to require coastal development permit applicants to, where feasible, include in their planning and design of a public project how they plan to build or contribute to promoting blue carbon projects.

This bill is the result of a transportation project in North County San Diego where widening of the I-5 freeway lanes addressed a number of environmental concerns expressed by residents in regards to the impacts to wildlife living in six coastal lagoons, 32 acres of wetlands, and 74 acres of coastal sage.

EXISTING LAW

Existing law, the California Coastal Act of 1976, among other things, requires anyone wishing to perform or undertake new development in the coastal zone, to obtain a coastal development permit from the California Coastal Commission, or a local government with a certified Local Coastal Program (LCP), except as specified.

THIS BILL

Specifically, AB 1992 would:

- Authorize the Commission to approve a blue carbon demonstration project that restores native coastal and/or marine habitats.
- Authorize the Commission to require an applicant seeking a coastal development permit for a project that impacts coastal wetland, subtidal, intertidal, or marine habitats or ecosystem to build or contribute to blue carbon demonstration projects to mitigate those impacts, where feasible.

- Requires the Commission to consult with sister agencies including the State Air Resources Board, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the State Coastal Conservancy, the State Lands Commission, and other public entities, and seek consultation with the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in developing the blue carbon demonstration project program.
- Each blue carbon demonstration project shall be designed, monitored, and have sufficient data collected in order to demonstrate the carbon uptake and sequestration achieved. This shall include an evaluation of relevant factors affecting the permanence of the sequestration. The results shall be presented to the commission in a public hearing.

The new requirements would apply to any projects on public land, which might include marine projects such as offshore wind, offshore oil and gas platform decommissioning, underwater pipelines, cables, marinas, ports and docks. Dredging, aquaculture operations and coastal bridge and roadwork could also fall under the bill's provisions. The Commission evaluates each project on a case-by-case basis.

Because oceans cover 70 percent of the planet, and because more than 80 percent of the global carbon cycle is circulated through the ocean, ocean ecosystem restoration has the greatest blue carbon development potential. Preserving, restoring and expanding these habitat types are a cost-effective way to slow the rate of climate change, while also protecting the coast, commercial fisheries and public health.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Edwin Borbon, Legislative Director
(916) 319-2077
Edwin.Borbon@asm.ca.gov

SUPPORT

- WILDCOAST (Sponsor)

OPPOSITION

- None on file
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